

Felix's Jewish wife, and with a double motive.

(1.) To gratify Drucilla's Jewish curiosity about this Messiah whose herald Paul was.

(2.) And on the part of Felix to secure a bribe.

5. The personel.

(1.) Felix a man in almost unlimited power, a man of great energy, a man of great wealth and knowledge and with all a man of insatiable avarice, and steeped in all the vices of a slave and of a Roman courtier.

(2.) Drucilla, a proud, haughty and vain woman—a Jewess an adulteress and bigamist.

(3.) Paul a prisoner, a man of small physique, no prestige, a poor and despised preacher of the Gospel; and in their absolute power. But a man of tact and courage.

(a.) He is only too glad to speak of "the faith." This is his mission. This is why he is in prison. He will miss no opportunity to testify for his master.

(b.) He is conscious of the situation of his peril; but at the same time of his Divine Protector. He is somewhat acquainted with the lives of his auditors, and knows their motives.

(c.) His Master came to save sinners; and he is sent out with this message. Sin is too dangerous, and just as ruinous to the high as to the low; time is too short; and life too serious for any trifling. His hearers want entertainment and money but Paul knows they need something else more. He will grant their request to speak to them "concerning the faith in Christ Jesus" but in such a way as to make it a direct message to his distinguished auditors. They are great sinners. Paul loves their souls and is desirous of their salvation. To this end they must know and be convicted of sin. He will so preach Christ as to reveal their own lives, and enable the Spirit to probe their own hearts.

I. CONCERNING THE FAITH.

1 The sermon.

O that all sermons were so true to the auditors. O that all preachers were so faithful.

(1) Of temperance. Think how a picture of self-control, of continence—a proper subjection of our appetites

and passions must have burned into the heart of a woman that put no restraint upon the gratification of her every whim. How dare Paul thus preach to an adulteress:

(2) Of righteousness. Justice in all the relations of life. How must this have sounded in the ears of a man whose whole life was an injustice, who cared nothing for the rights of others, who was then unjustly holding this very preacher in prison, who would murder and imprison or do any thing for place and money:

(3.) Of the judgment. Of the judgment that come upon all for the deeds done in the body. How unwelcome to any sinner is the thought of judgment! How much more unwelcome that judgment when the very secrets of our hearts will be uncovered: But how terrible such thoughts must have been to this dissolute pair!

II. THE EFFECT OF THE SERMON.

1 Upon Drucilla.

(1.) She like too many of her nation doubtless took refuge in a false hope. She could say as they said to John the Baptist, Abraham is my father, and I am an heir to his promises. I am one of the chosen race.

(2.) She had been brought up in an atmosphere of Jewish bigotry. With a knowledge of the holy law of God she had violated it with a high hand. She was law-hardened as many now are gospel-hardened.

(3) She was proud and haughty. Proud of her race, proud of her place, proud of her beauty; and if Paul's discourse did probe her heart she was used to stifling conviction and was now too proud to show any signs of being moved by such a humble teacher as he.

2. Upon Felix.

(1.) His boyhood, his youth, his manhood, his whole life was a training in vice. He never before had his eyes so opened. He was taken by storm. He never was so plainly and truthfully dealt with. He had never seen himself in the light of a holy law and a righteous judgement; and not being schooled in stifling convictions, as was Drucilla, he could not suppress his feelings. He "trembled." The sword of the spirit was a new weapon to him and he asked to be out of its reach.

(2.) He knew and felt his duty But did not do it. He eased his conscience by promising to call for the messenger of God at a more convenient season. Did that more convenient season ever come? He lived for power; but two more years and he was humbled and disgraced. We hear no more of him. Drucilla perished in an eruption of Vesuvius.

III. PRACTICAL CONCLUSIONS.

1. Note how Felix's life conspired to give him this one opportunity for salvation.

(1.) He was a poor Roman slave where it is very likely he never would have come within the reach of the Gospel.

(2.) But by the energy and the talents God had given him he had gained his freedom and risen to power and wealth.

(3.) By the double fact that he is married to a Jewess, and made governor of Palestine, he becomes not only acquainted with the religion of Jehovah, but receives a "more exact knowledge concerning the way"—the Christian religion.

(4.) By virtue of his position he is brought into touch with the greatest preacher of his time, and by the curiosity of his wife, he hears the Gospel and is offered the opportunity of his life.

(5.) He not only could have been saved but being the governor of Palestine, he could have protected the Apostles and the infant church, and how different her history would have read, God only knows. But for the tyranny of a sinful life, for fear of the Jews, and for the love of money, he procrastinates—loses all.

(6.) This was the convenient season for him. His whole life brought him to this supreme moment; and God brought Paul unto him with the message of life. We know not that he ever heard the word of life again. We only know that the people whom he feared brought about his disgrace. Oh! that he had heeded the voice of God instead of the voice of the people!

2. When God calls that is always a convenient season and it may be the convenient season.

(1.) Your life is becoming more and more fixed; change more difficult.